DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 225 445 HE 015 796

AUTHOR Lee, Susan; And Others
TITLE The Emerging Culture in a Residential College Led by Women.
PUB DATE Aug 82
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (Washington, DC, August 1982).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrators; Beliefs; Communication Disorders; Cultural Context; *Females; *Group Experience; Higher Education; Journalism Education; *Living Learning Centers; Mass Media; On Campus Students; *Peer Influence; *Residential Colleges; Role Perception; Social Structure; Student Attitudes; Theater Arts
IDENTIFIERS Illinois

ABSTRACT

The culture in a female-managed residential college that focused on communication studies was examined. The college, which was opended in 1981, is a unique living unit under the supervision of a head and associate master, in which 107 students live in a collection of suites representing the academic disciplines of journalism, radio/television/film, communication studies, communication disorders, and theatre and interpretation. The impact of having women in the positions of primary authority on the emerging culture at the college was assessed through interviews, participant observation, and surveys. Attention was directed to shared beliefs, culture, group development, social structure in process, authority relations, and perception of tasks. Preliminary findings focus on: confusion of role identity, title, and authorization of women masters; variations in degree of investment in the organization; denial and rejection of the mission as stated by the head master; polarity in perception of masters as 'good mothers' and devaluation of professional status and authority; ambivalence expressed by moving toward or away from mentor functions; and relationship and perception of a male graduate assistant. It is concluded that a powerful dependency culture took hold of the college: students felt helpless or unable to initiate activities and perceived the college as a kind of safe haven for escape. Students were not able to experience the masters as differentiated, competent, and caring women, but saw the master with the unidimensional view held by the group. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED225445

THE EMERGING CULTURE IN A RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE LED BY WOMEN

Susan Lee, Ph.D.
Pamela Cooper, Ph.D.
Kathy Galvin, Ph.D.

Northwestern University
August 1982

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Susan Lee

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

NIE 015 796

As presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, August, 1982, Washington D.C.

In 1981 a Communication Residential College was opened at a private University in the midwest with a history in exploring the residential college concept. A residential college is a unique living unit that encourages students to apply a theme of an academic nature to their living experience, under the supervision and guidance of a Head and Associate Master, acting as the academic arm of the venture.

Both Head Master and Associate Master of the Communication Residential College, CRC, were women. This offered the opportunity for a unique field study focussing on the dynamics of an emerging culture as impacted by having women in the primary observation by three researchers, and surveys of the total membership. This study Examines the shared beliefs, task behavior, culture, and authority relations that developed over a years time.

The 107 undgergraduate students live in a collection of suites on three floors in the brand new facility. The main floor houses the master's offices, a conferences area, small kitchenette, and living room. The main floor also has a suite of highly sophisticated facilities for computers, word processors, audio, video and a variety of other technology. These facilities, however, were not ready upon the opening of the college...due to design errors. The equipment had been ordered, but could not be installed until all design errors had been corrected. It was the first college on campus with equipment.

The majority of the students were men and 40% were incoming freshmen. They represent the academic disciplines of journalism, radio-tv film, communication studies, communicative disorders, theatre and interpretation, CAS and Tech. All students applied with little information as to the character, nature, or goal of the organization, other than the stated theme and the awareness of the opportunities to use the equipment provided. The new college was located in a preferred area of the campus and was a sidewalk away from its mirror image that had the theme of International Studies. The hasd master there was a veteran of the system, and male.

A high level of ambiguity was prevelent for both the masters and as well as the residents. For students it took the form of vague notions as to somehow integrating the theme of communication into their activities in the college with the help of the masters. The masters had to struggle with roles that were never clearly defined. The masters structure consisted of female head master, female associate master, male grad student-assistant to the master, male and female undergrad RA's.

All participants encountered multiple boundary issues. For residents: suites, floor, college, dept. and discipline. For the masters: the college, the central administration and housing office, purchasing,architects,their own dept., and discipline.

Preliminary findings on this emerging culture focus on central themes that were discovered; 1. confusion of role identity, title and authorization of women masters, 2. denial and rejection of the mission of the head master, 3. polarization in the masters' team, 4. boundary issues and the fantasy life of the college's perceived image in the larger university.

These and other findings will be reported in depth and their implications for gender-related theory of authority relations explored.

This inquiry was guided by literature on women authority as well as literature in group development in the Tavistock tradition. Key issues relevant to this study have been summarized.

In Newton and Levinson (1973), three signifigant themes are raised that guide the inquiry in attempting to understand the task, social structure, culture, and social process of an enterprise; 1. The larger the group, the weaker the sentience and the more opportunitios to project and divest from the group, 2. why does the group form...what is the fantasy that brings them together, 3. How do they invest in the leaders and others.

In Wright (1979) a cintral hypothesis regarding women in authority is advanced; Tapes showed that overall both male and female group members were more positive toward male authority figures than toward female. Women saw the

female consultants as less giving. There was marked compensation from the perceived deprivation and anxiety by turning to peers, which led to hostility if the peers did not reciprocate. This was most noticeable in the women who usually turned their anger toward their peers rather than the consultant. Wright Theorizes that women in authority are endowed with even more power than men. Gender, not skill or competence, effects the members' experience.

Gould and Wright (1977) examined the non reciprocating female leader. They found direct attack, displacement and projection, and passive aggressive behavior as the primary defenses.

Taylor et al (1977) in a study of an all female conference, found that members had difficulty integrating femaleness with the exercise of authority. The group also defended against the dependency and "needy" feelings. Nurtuance and competence cannot be integrated. There was marked devaluation of "mothering" functions because they indicate vulnerability.

Mays (1980)used the Tavistock model so that the unconscious sex-role socialization of early life would be opened up to observation. It becomes a parody of family and bureaucratic structure rather than representation of that structure. Mays discovered that the male response to females in authority was hostility and dependency. The majority of the males would not cooperate as subordinates in pursuing the goal of the leader. Males describe her as manipulative, devious, inhuman, cruel. Males in female led groups regularly expressed a fear of having lost control. Fear of the female authorities and overt anger often preceded expressions of dependency on the female leaders. Men occasionally identified the leader as a female-father figure. They expressed doubts about the "real" sex of the leader. (Women are warm, supportive, expressive, and loving.) Initially the women in women led groups behaved in ways contrary to other socialogical studies; they were assertive, instrumental, and task oriented, the women perceived themselves as friendly and warm. Later however, the women became quieter and expressed feelings of congusion. In the intergroup events...

the men formed task groups and the women formed sentient of encounter groups. Finally, in a case study by Bayes and Newton (1976) the following was cited; The view pervasive in the culture, that women should be powerless, nurturant and submissive, co-exists with, and is in response to, the fantasy that women are potentially more powerful and dangerous than men. Women in authority are responded to as an individual but also by sex-linked role conceptions. Lack of recognition of these influences leads to their projection or being experienced elsewhere.

I. Role Idintity Confusion

The menbers of the college demonstrated an inability to integrate all aspects of the Head Master in their experience of her. She was perceived in an unindeminsional way with most references relating to her as nurturing, caring and supportive.

"She is wonderful, a real help. She does everything she can do. I'm really glad we had a female master. She's kind of like a housemother."
"She's more like a mother than a leader. She's really interested in the dorm and what we do. Part of the reason we act like we do, friendly, not rude, is because be don't want to dissapoint her."
"She doesn't run things. She's not a dictator. She seems more like one of us."
"She gives us guidance, but not someone who slaps your hands...not someone sitting there at a desk running it."
"She was like a leader, but now I think of her as a mother...kinda like she has mature input and she's interested and wants it to go."
"She's visible which is admirable, because you know she has a family."

No one interviewed was able to identify the Head Master as full professor and department chair. Only isolated characteristics were described, identifying that students seemed to have difficulty in integrating competence with nurturance.

There was a great deal of expressed support for her caring, giving role. everyone reported that things like the cookies, and thanksgiving dinner was great. In facr, events related to food were often cited as significant in the participants experience. It was also noted that no reference was made to the Head Master as role model or mentor, in fact no one from the college signed up for her courses.

There were direct challenges to her authority however. Perhaps on of the most interesting "attacks" come from the student organized government. The students elected an all male executive board with the exception of the female secretary. The male president openly devalued, attacked, and attempted to undermine the

goals established by the head master. He would "go over her head" and attempt to relate directly to university officials, miss regularly scheduled meetings with the master in a passive-aggressive fashion, and in one instance attempted to change the language of the CRC constitution to read he, and him in reference to the master...when challenged on this point he countered "you won't be here forever."

The larger community commented on the scene as if it were and isolated personality clash between the Head Master and the president. They did not at anytime accept responsibility for having elected him. (In fact in the spring elections they selected a second set of officers that followed the same approach with male president leading the "attack" against the authority of the Head Master.)

The head master had stated at length that her goal for the college was to allow the students to govern themselves, even if it meant they would make some mistakes along the way. She would only intervene as far as supporting the academic mission, since that was her primary task as head master. There was little recognition of her power or authority. She was never referred to as the leader or director of the organization but described instead as guiding.

> "A Master should guide. That's what she does."
> "She guides, organized and has lots of input."
> "I don't know what she does","but she's real nice."
> "She sends neat notes to us...she does stuff we don't see I guess."
> "Her role is to kinda organize us..she couldn't control us alone so they have this guy downstairs, I don't know his name."

At times, the Head Master received the challenges from her own team. The most glaring example was an instance early in the year, in which the male undergraduate RA was hesitant to give the Head Master his key to the college so that she could check on the equipment rooms.

The Head Master was most often referred to as "she", both in interviews and especially by the executive board committee. At other times she is called by her first name, never her academic title.

The most other signifigant finding with regard to the role confusion had to do with the Associate Master. In the fimal analysis it appeared to be some effort on the participants part to split the team. The masters were in fact having difficulty working as a team, or in, making much progress in defining their roles and expectations for each other. The student response however, was not in proportion to the difficulties they were having.

Not one participant interviewed had full or accurate information regarding the Associate Master. For most members, she was absolutely invisible even though she ate 14 lunches during one quarter with participants in the common dining area, had regular contact with faculty associates by letter, and was interviewed or referred to in commonly read publications at least 9 times. If they knew her by name, they did not know that she was the Associate Master. If they knew she was the Associate Master, they said they had never seen or heard of her.

> "I've seen her once or twice...I think she's giving a seminar, but I don't know anything about her."
> "She must be very active at the college, cause I see her at lunch alot."
> "She's not around much, but I'm sure she does what she can."

The majority reported having seen her at lunch...hastily adding that she did what she could. Most thought she was just another faculty associate with the college. At one point she was identified as having something to do with the male undergraduate assistant master. Interestingly inough, she is a very visible faculty member in the larger university. At one point during her interview, she "slipped" and referred to herself as the assistant master.

II. Undermining the Mission of the Master

There were numerous efforts to undermine, reject, and sabbotage the academic mission. The master was the real academic leader of the college, and stated her goals clearly from the very beginning. There were 11 written references to her beliefs available to the residents

in the first phases of the college's development. In fact, in a survey of residents expectations for the college, taken on opening day... the #2 priority or expectation related to academic accomplishments that would happen while living in the CRC. This in turn is compared to interview data during the fimal weeks of the spring quarter where students unaimously declared the academic task a failure.

The sub-theme that must be explored in relation to this theme has to do with the defensive use of the equipment ussue. When the equipment did not arrive until well into the year, the students were very disappointed and alternately discouraged. (Equipment had not been identified as a high priority on the opening survey.) The whole equipment dilemma was very frustrating for the Head Master. In many ways it violated her original concept of her role. It was not an area of expertise for her and she was forced to be dependent on the help of others. The students did not blame her for all the problems and delays with the equipment. They did attack each other however, focusing on the equipment chairman as a scapegoat. There were many references to their feeling betrayed///but when questioned they could not identify who was responsible. There was a great deal of contained fury in the group. By the end of the year, the equipment had become the cause celebre. It was the new mission, imposed by the residents. Every interview conducted in the spring quarter inded up in exploring various themes related to the equipment.

> "If the equipment was here, we would have been successful with the academic stuff."
> "If we had equipment then we could have used the faculty associates better."
> "No body blames her, she couldn't do anything about it."
> "It's the only reason to live here, nobody else has this kind of equipment"
> "It's his (eq. chair) fault...he's a perfectionist and doesn't want us to use the stuff just for fun."
> "It's not here yet because they (?) couldn't get their act together"

"It would be nice to have people help us with the equipment and stop trying to ram communication sown our throats with all those piano sides."

III. The Master Team

Besides the difficulties already identified with the Associate Master..., there were other issues that developed with the team. The head master was highly identified with the Resident Assistants living in the college. She felt supported and liked by them. They functioned effectively in carrying out the administrative and housing related problems. The confusion aroused however in reviewing the head master's journal which had several citations demonstrating strained relations with the male member of that team. Her interview comments reflected that the whole team was in tact, and working in a wa that was satisfying.

The Assistant Master of the college was a graduate student that had studied with the head master earlier in his undergraduate career. He could be described by some as a "counter culture" figure. Like the other masters, he too was not clear about his task and role in the college. He kept regular hours in the college, was fairly visible, yet members had trouble describing or discussing his role or presence in the college.

He made several comments and observations that indicated a desire for a more special relationship with the head master. The bery openning of hes journal chronicles his feelings of being displaced by the RA's. A signifigant fact was almost overlooked with regard to his identification with the master...in winter quarter he "dropped out" of graduate school, in his own way giving up on the academic mission or supporting the master in the task.

There was no clearly designated second in command on the team. The head master did however, often rely on the expertise of the male master that headed the college that opened the same time as the CRC.

IV. Percieved Images in the Larger University

The group actively struggled with their fantasy life about how they were viewed by the larger university. There were numerous instances where various pranks were played. These pranks ranged from sabbotaging various activities in the college

. to stealing university property and hiding it in the college where the campus police had to make regular visits.

"I hate all the bad publicity, we're not that naughty/"
"I would like to be known as a friendly place, not where people steal stuff."

The other image was of isolation and invisibility.

"We keep getting called the new dorm. I hate that."
"My boyfriend came to visit and he couldn't find me, because no one knew where this place was."
"It's real dead at CRC,,,no one else comes to the parties...wejust have parties with ourselves, it's okay because they're nice people but it would be great to have some new faces."
"We never really got off the ground and accomplished anything so that people would know we were here."
"We're percieved as aloof. A lot of people have tried to change that perception but it can't be done."
"Nobody knows or cares we're here. We were all set to make an impact but it never happened."

In conclusion, it appeared that a powerful dependency culture took hold of the college. In keeping with the dependancy, students felt helpless or unable to initiate activities. They also percieved the college as a kind of sanctuary or "safe haven" escape.

It was also apparent that gender of the masters had a signifigant impact on the students. They were not able to experience the masters as differentiated, competent and caring women. The master for their part, collided with the unidimensional view held by the group.

ABSTRACT

THE EMERGING CULTURE IN A RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE LED BY WOMEN

Susan Lee, Ph.D.
Pamela Cooper, Ph.D.
Kathy Galvin, Ph.D.

In 1981 a residential college opened, focusing on communication studies. The college is a unique living unit that encourages residents to explore the communication theme under the supervision and guidance of a Head and Associate Master, both female.

This setting afforded the opportunity for a unique, qualitative field study focussing on the dynamics of an emerging culture as impacted by having women in the positions of primary authority. Through intensive interviews, participant observation, and surveys, this study examines the shared beliefs, culture, structures and fantasies that arise.

The 107 students live in a collection of suites, representing the academic disciplines of journalism, radio-T.V.-film, communication studies, communication disorders, and theatre and interpretation. They all joined with little information as to the character, nature, or goal of the organization.

Our interviews and observations focused on group development, shared assumptions and beliefs, social structure in process, authority relations, and perception of tasks

Preliminary findings on the emerging culture focus on (1) confusion of role identity, title, and authorization of women masters, (2) variations in degree of investment in the organization, (3) denial and rejection of the 'mission' as stated by the head master, (4) polarity in perception of masters...'good mother' and devaluation of professional status and authority. (5) ambivalence expressed by moving toward or away from mentor functions, (6) relationship and perception of male graduate assistant.